



Going nowhere fast: Cars and buses sit frozen in their tracks Wednesday morning on northbound Lake Shore Drive, abandoned by drivers. Vehicles remained stuck into the evening. Hundreds of people had spent a night stranded in vehicles as the city's third-biggest snowstorm clobbered the Chicago area. **E. JASON WAMBSGANS/TRIBUNE PHOTO**

Round 2: Bitter cold clutches buried city

Motorists fume, but Daley aide defends call to keep drive open

By John Byrne and Cynthia Dizikes
TRIBUNE REPORTERS

Chicago's iconic lakefront boulevard — its snow-swept lanes littered with cars and buses entombed in drifts — emerged Wednesday as the defining image of the blizzard of 2011, a scene of slow-moving chaos amid a fierce storm otherwise handled deftly by millions throughout the region.

While workers struggled to clear vehicles and allow plows to begin unclogging one of the city's main north-south arteries, many who spent harrowing hours stranded on Lake Shore Drive during the height of the storm lashed out at the city's decision to keep the road open.

"I feel like someone missed the boat on not closing down Lake Shore Drive before it became a disaster," said Craig Close, who was stuck on the road for about eight hours as he tried to make it home to Lincoln Square.

There were no deaths or major injuries on the drive, but there was plenty of blame to go around. Commuters ignored daylong warnings and chose to drive home on a road known to be buffeted by fierce winds and sometimes waves sweeping off the lake. And city leaders faced questions about why they let the drive stay open for so long as snow piled up.

Mayor Richard Daley was conspicuously absent from the public eye during a high-profile city crisis, instead dispatching his chief of staff to take the blame and apologize to those left stranded.

"At the end of the day, the Lake Shore Drive decision was a judgment call. Specifically, it was my judgment call, in

Please turn to **Page 7**

Delivery of your Tribune

The storm impeded delivery of Wednesday's edition in some places, particularly outlying areas. The Tribune is offering a free online e-edition for readers and is restoring print delivery as conditions improve. **PAGE 2**



Ronnie Kovar, from left, digs toward his car Wednesday with help from Joanna Johnston and Angela Gordo at Cortland Street and Campbell Avenue in Chicago. Tales of kindness abounded in the storm. **MICHAEL TERCHA/TRIBUNE PHOTO**

12 PAGES OF BLIZZARD COVERAGE INSIDE

Storm brings out the best

Countless stories emerge about acts of kindness and compassion by friends, neighbors and strangers to those left in need by the blizzard. **PAGE 14**

Tom Skilling's complete forecast on the back of **live!**

Slow to no business

Many storefronts and offices closed Wednesday as firms big and small told employees to stay home. But some work got done remotely. **BUSINESS, PAGE 21**

So how cold is it?

As temperatures drop in Chicagoland, get the latest news at **chicagotribune.com** and up-to-the-minute weather forecasts at **chicagoweathercenter.com**



8 A.M.
-6



NOON
8



4 P.M.
11

Storm lumbers away, but wintry hazards remain, officials warn

By Antonio Olivo and Rex W. Huppke
TRIBUNE REPORTERS

Slammed by a blizzard of historic proportions and still struggling to dig out, the Chicago area now braces for a spiteful cold, freezing out any thought of a quick return to normal.

The powdery drifts blocking porch steps, garages, cars and seemingly everything else will harden into thick and stubborn mounds Thursday, when temperatures are expected to barely creep into double digits after subzero lows overnight.

That means another day of canceled school, missed work and treacherous, if not impossible travel everywhere from urban side streets to the rural fringes of collar counties.

The Chicago Public Schools had gone 12 years without a snow day until Wednesday, and a second one has been called for Thursday, with plans for Friday still undecided. Scores of suburban districts and Catholic schools, as well as the City Colleges of Chicago, were also closed for a second day.

With the storm striking in midweek, many people are anxious to get back to work and resume regular activities. But in Chicago, there was still no word on when hundreds of streets will be plowed, and emergency officials emphasized that wintry hazards are far from over.

"If you don't have to go out, please stay home," Jose Santiago, head of the city's Office of Emergency Management and Communications, said Wednesday. "Even though the snow has moved on, the danger has not."

The storm that roared in Tuesday with 70-mph winds did not die until the following morning. By then, 20.2 inches

Please turn to **Page 14**

NATION & WORLD

Deadly violence, chaos grip Cairo

Gunfire was reported in Cairo early Thursday after a day of deadly violence in a main city square. Opponents of President Hosni Mubarak accused his backers of orchestrating

the violence and chaos. The U.S. is increasingly pinning its hopes on Egypt's military as the best chance for pushing out Mubarak. **PAGES 15, 16**

live!

Anonymous tweeter puts bleepin' words in Emanuel's mouth

Tribune restoring delivery; free e-edition available

As the Chicago area digs out of the drifts left by the third-biggest snowstorm in its history, we want you to know that the Chicago Tribune is working diligently to restore normal operations and deliver the newspaper you depend on each day.

The storm clogged highways and residential roads, closed schools and shut down thousands of offices and businesses across the region. It also had a significant impact on our operations, impeding delivery of Wednesday's edition.

As conditions improve, we intend to deliver as many of the undelivered Wednesday papers as possible along with Thursday's edition.

Despite the weather-related problems with the print edition, our newsgathering teams continue to provide you with the most comprehensive coverage of the storm and its impact.

Our websites posted record volumes during the storm as readers sought the latest breaking news on traffic conditions, school and business closings, and the weather forecast. We encourage you to turn to chicagotribune.com, chicagobreakingnews.com and chicagoweathercenter.com for up-to-the-minute news.

We also are offering readers online access to our e-edition at <http://eedition.chicagotribune.com/Olive/ODE/ChicagoTribune>. There readers will find an electronic version of the entire Chicago Tribune as it appears in print. This e-edition will be free through Friday.

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CORRECTIONS & CLARIFICATIONS

■ Simeon football player Darius Scott was mis-identified in a photo caption on Page 6 of the Chicago Sports section Tuesday.

The Tribune regrets the error.

To report errors, call the Reader Help line at 312-222-3348 or e-mail readerhelp@tribune.com.

WINNING LOTTERY NUMBERS

ILLINOIS			
Feb. 2 Pick 3 midday	924	Feb. 2 Lotto	03 10 24 38 40 41
Feb. 2 Pick 4 midday	8434	Feb. 2 Lotto jackpot	\$2.25M
Feb. 2 Pick 3 evening	349	Feb. 4 Mega Millions jackpot	\$12M
Feb. 2 Pick 4 evening	3692	Feb. 2 Powerball	
Feb. 2 Little Lotto	01 07 28 29 38	03 14 33 53 57 PB-36
		Feb. 2 Powerball jackpot	\$35M
INDIANA			
Feb. 2 Daily 3 midday	210	Feb. 2 Lucky 5 midday	
Feb. 2 Daily 4 midday	4806	05 13 29 31 33
Feb. 2 Daily 3 evening	752	Feb. 2 Lucky 5 evening	
Feb. 2 Daily 4 evening	7368	01 04 13 14 24
		Feb. 2 Lotto	02 05 10 16 20 48
MICHIGAN			
Feb. 2 Daily 3 midday	470	Feb. 2 C. Lotto	11 12 24 34 43 44
Feb. 2 Daily 4 midday	1768	Feb. 2 Keno	04 07 12 18 22 24
Feb. 2 Daily 3 evening	132		26 30 34 40 42 46 53 55
Feb. 2 Daily 4 evening	1767		56 60 62 66 73 76 77 80
Feb. 2 Fantasy 5	05 06 08 10 25		
WISCONSIN			
Feb. 2 Pick 3	695	Feb. 2 SuperCash	
Feb. 2 Pick 4	5611	01 02 07 21 24 34
Feb. 2 Badger 5	02 13 20 23 27	Feb. 2 Megabucks	
		01 07 22 27 28 36



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Mayoral candidate Gery Chico (second from left) helped a driver Tuesday night in Wrigleyville. CHRIS SWEDA/TRIBUNE PHOTO

Daley fall guy falls into drift

After this week's terrible blizzard, the politics of snow in Chicago should be clear to anyone who can read the signs.

But you also have to know the creatures and their peculiar habitats. And you must be able to identify the tracks they leave — and those they don't leave — in all that snow.

These include the trackless Mayor Richard Daley and the mayoral candidates eager to replace him. The four leading pretenders left no footprints of their own on Wednesday. But Gery Chico, Rahm Emanuel, Carol Moseley Braun and Miguel del Valle promised they'd study how the city handled the blizzard. I figure that'll take until May or June.

But one fellow at City Hall was ordered to leave his footprints so all could see. Naturally, he's the fall guy, though it wasn't the fall guy's fault at all.

By Thursday, Chicago taxpayers will be getting angry, as downtown is cleared and their side streets remain clogged.

"They're already angry, and I'm not too happy about it either," said Ald. Scott Waguespack, 32nd. He was told late Wednesday that two high lifts from his ward — equipment necessary to clear narrow streets without damaging parked cars — had been commandeered.

"It's ridiculous," he said. "Our residents pay property taxes, and they want their side streets cleared. That snow will freeze, and it'll be that much harder to clear from the side streets."

Obviously, there were many tales of heroism and dedication by public servants and good neighbors who stood up to fight the blizzard, in the city and in the suburbs.

But wherever you find decent human beings, you also find politicians and evidence of their movements.

One sign was about as subtle as a gigantic billboard with blinking neon. The mayor avoided all the snow news conferences on Wednesday and let his underlings take the heat.

Every naturalist knows that when Bigfoot hibernates, he leaves no tracks.

So he wasn't standing next to Tom Byrne, his hand-picked Streets and



John Kass

jskass@tribune.com

Sanitation commissioner. Byrne spent his career as a cop, not as some snow fighter, and it's clear that he violated the cardinal rule of Chicago snow-fighting:

You never, ever, ever lose control of Lake Shore Drive, no matter how much it snows, no matter how hard the wind blows. Ever.

The last snow fighter who lost control of the drive lost it more than 40 years ago and was banished to the private sector by the late Mayor Richard J. Daley.

Another sign was that Byrne wasn't the star of any of the news conferences even though snow is Street and San's business. And when he did speak, he was meek and his voice was tiny.

City Hall timed the news conferences to coincide with TV news broadcasts, and they sent dozens of others to the podium to fill the news vacuum. These experts told us, among other things, not to drink alcohol, to stay warm, and to please not eat the snow.

I found myself hoping that they'd at least warn us not to shovel while eating Polish sausages and smoking cigarettes after having a few snorts of dark rum chased down with some tasty snow.

It went on and on, keeping Byrne off-mic.

Reporters demanded to know who was responsible for closing LSD after hundreds of motorists had become stranded there. That was an honest question, but the critical issue wasn't whether or when to close the drive. It was losing the drive so that it had to be closed.

Historically, Chicago snow fighters

run salt spreaders with plows up and down LSD even before the snow hits, pouring on the salt, and pouring on some more, ready for the first flake to fall.

"That's how it's done," said a South Side political source, a strong supporter of the mayor who understands snow fighting.

"You know the mayor's furious, because Streets and San had advance warning, days of it," said my pro-Daley expert. "You run four spreaders together in the southbound lanes and four together going in the northbound lanes, and in between you run garbage trucks with plows. You do that, you can control the drive. Everybody with experience knows this. But that's the problem."

As we talked over the phone, the TV was on, and I could see mayoral chief of staff Ray Orozco taking questions. They were centered on why City Hall hadn't closed LSD earlier on Tuesday. Byrne and Daley were nowhere to be seen.

"You don't close Lake Shore Drive," said my South Side snow guy. "If you close the drive, then you've paralyzed the entire North Side. There's no place for the traffic to go, and those people can't get home. It's not 'Why they didn't close the drive sooner?' The question is why they lost control of the drive in the first place."

But that wasn't part of the official choreography, so poor Orozco had to stand before reporters and take it.

He looked like a man who'd just been ordered to sing at his own execution.

"At the end of the day, the Lake Shore Drive decision was a judgment call, and ultimately, it was my judgment call," Orozco said. "And I stand here ... to tell you it was the right decision to make."

The last time I checked, Orozco isn't the mayor. He doesn't run Streets and San. And he's not one of the mayoral candidates who talk of dealing with hard truths but didn't have much to say Wednesday.

Orozco was the one who had to talk. It was painful to watch. But then, fall guys are also part of the politics of snow.

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— CPS interim CEO Terry Mazany

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Snowtalk

What day is it?

Thursday is the Chinese New Year, marking the Year of the Rabbit. But if it's a white rabbit, good luck finding one out there.

Right on

Weather forecasters take a lot of heat — pun intended — but there's no denying they got it right on this storm. If only the National Weather Service had handled the 2016 Olympic bid, the recruiting of LeBron James and the Bears' NFC title game plan.

Speaking of football

There's some big game on Sunday, and Tuesday's typically inane Media Day festivities barely registered a blip on the news-o-meter behind the blizzard and the crisis in Egypt. Can you think of any time in recent memory when the Super Bowl has been so overshadowed?



Punxsutawney Phil
JASON COHN/REUTERS
PHOTO

Speaking of shadows

Punxsutawney Phil saw his in Pennsylvania on Wednesday, which, according to legend, portends an early spring. Meanwhile, such Groundhog Day festivities in the Chicago area were canceled, which, according to legend, makes Bill Murray's head explode.

— Rob Manker

thenumber

10 Expected high temperature Thursday. Think of it as roughly 1 degree for every 2 inches of snow.

The old Top 5

A look at how the Tribune covered the city's previous blizzard bombardments

By Stephan Benzkofer
TRIBUNE REPORTER

Before the Blizzard of 2011, now No. 3 at 20.2 inches of snow, these five storms left their mark here. There are common themes — school and road closures, among them — but differences too. In 1931, in the midst of the Great Depression, the storm created much-needed jobs as the unemployed grabbed their shovels to help the city dig out. Two words you rarely see in newspaper coverage of a blizzard: "Crowds cheer."



19.2"

March 25-26, 1930



23.0"

January 26-27, 1967



18.8"

January 13-14, 1979



21.6"

January 1-3, 1999



16.2"

March 7-8, 1931

Snowstorm couldn't stop these babies

Call them blizzard babies. As one of Chicago's worst snowstorms raged outside, these babies decided to swap the calm of a mother's womb for winter's havoc. Surrounded by 16-inch snowdrifts, Andy Johnson called 911 around 2 a.m. Wednesday after his wife, Julia, woke up in intense pain. When the ambulance arrived, it couldn't make it to their building in Chicago's Logan Square neighborhood. "She had to walk down the street about a block in the blizzard, and she had a contraction about half-way and had to stop," he said. She gave birth to little Vada

Johnson 40 minutes after arriving at Swedish Covenant Hospital in Chicago. "She's perfect," Johnson said. Meanwhile, Tony and Kim Carlson of Mundelein were worried they wouldn't make it to Northwest Community Hospital in Arlington Heights in time. Tony called a friend who picked the couple up in his snowplow, but when Kim started screaming, he called 911. They transferred out of the snowplow and into the ambulance at a gas station. "I felt so much better because they had people in the back with her if she went into labor, as opposed to me and my guy and a snowplow in

the middle of the storm," he said. Miles away at Provena Mercy Medical Center in Aurora, Stewart and Katherine Ruch thought they had made all the necessary arrangements for a blizzard delivery. Katherine, who was eight days overdue, was at the hospital scheduled to induce labor Tuesday. But by the time the labor progressed, Katherine experienced complications, and her surgeon, who had spent the night at the hospital, was already performing another emergency cesarean section. Around 3 a.m. Wednesday, the hospital sent a crew to pick up



Katherine, Becket and Stewart Ruch.
SCOTT STRAZZANTE/TRIBUNE PHOTO

another doctor, who was stranded at his home. That doctor arrived in time to perform the C-section. Becket John Ruch was born at 4:29 a.m.

— Duaa Eldeib

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BLIZZARD OF 2011



Snowplows are out in force at O'Hare International Airport on Wednesday. Some flights at both Midway and O'Hare are scheduled to resume Thursday. MICHAEL TERCHA/TRIBUNE PHOTO

What to expect Thursday

METRA
Schedules should begin to get back on track

Metra plans to operate a normal week-day schedule Thursday on seven of its lines but only a “modified” weekday schedule on the remaining four lines. This will particularly affect riders on BNSF and UP West, North and West lines, Metra said.

Metra advised riders to check **metra-rail.com**, their “My Metra” e-mail accounts, or the news media for the latest information.

Service will be restored on all lines that were canceled Wednesday, the first such cancellations in Metra’s 27-year history. Those lines were the North Central Line, Heritage Corridor, South-West Service, the Metra Electric Blue Island branch and the Union Pacific McHenry branch.

Service on Metra’s most-used lines, the UP and BNSF lines, will be modified, Metra spokeswoman Judy Pardonnet said. The changes as of late Wednesday were:

- UP West:** The following trains will not operate: inbound trains Nos. 28 and 34 and outbound trains Nos. 17 and 19. Additional stops will be added to train Nos. 30 and 36 to accommodate passengers who normally ride those trains.
- UP Northwest:** The No. 628 train will not operate. Train No. 630 will make additional stops to accommodate passengers who normally ride that train.
- UP North:** The following trains will not operate: inbound trains Nos. 310, 312, 316 and 324, and outbound trains Nos. 305, 307, 311 and 313. Other trains will add stops to accommodate passengers who normally ride those trains.
- BNSF:** Metra anticipates changes to about one-third of the BNSF trains. Some will be canceled, some will make additional stops.

The main problem, Pardonnet said, was the inability to get contractors to clear rail yards and free equipment buried under drifting snow.

CTA
Bitter cold will test this week’s successes

Having made it through the blizzard, the CTA and its customers face a new headache — bitter cold — that may cause reroutes or delays on buses and trains.

The CTA’s goal is for train wait times to be eight minutes or less, as they are on a normal day during rush periods on many of the lines.

Extra crews have been assigned to key



Octavio Ballesteros, center, rides with other tired Metra commuters on a delayed east-bound train to the Loop on Wednesday. ANTONIO PEREZ/TRIBUNE PHOTO

rail towers to help “exercise” balky track switches and respond quickly to signal malfunctions, CTA officials said.

PACE
Return to normal service is bus agency’s goal

After shutting down services early Wednesday evening, Pace officials said they were hopeful normal services would resume Thursday.

Impassable roadways, icy conditions and low ridership contributed to Wednesday’s decision to close the lines early. Pace was able to mobilize about 55 out of 200 bus routes Wednesday.

AIRPORTS
Some, though not all, flights are set to resume

Commercial flights are expected to start up Thursday at Chicago’s two airports, following the grounding of almost all planes since Tuesday afternoon.

But it won’t represent a return to normal operations at O’Hare International and Midway airports.

Airline officials say they expect additional cancellations Thursday, but full flight schedules might resume on Friday if dispatchers are able to get aircraft and crews in the right positions.

Only a handful of flights, including cargo planes and a charter, arrived at O’Hare and Midway on Wednesday, according to the Chicago Department of Aviation.

SCHOOLS
Classes will continue to be canceled for most

Hundreds of area schools from Chicago to Gurnee and Naperville will remain shuttered Thursday for the second straight day.

Officials with the Archdiocese of Chicago urged its 256 schools across Cook and Lake counties to remain closed.

Several schools that plan to resume classes will open later Thursday. In the south suburbs, for instance, Lincoln-Way High School District 210 cautioned students and parents that buses would run 90 minutes late.

Chicago Public Schools officials canceled classes for the second straight day. Interim CEO Terry Mazany said school bus service would resume no sooner than Monday.

ELECTRICITY
Power expected to be restored by midday

Commonwealth Edison Co. crews will keep working around the clock Thursday to restore power to thousands of customers.

ComEd has dispatched more than 300 crews, said spokesman Bennie Currie. As of late Wednesday, about 23,000 customers were without power, including 18,800 in Chicago. Currie said ComEd aims to restore power to most of them by midday Thursday.

Overall, power had been restored to 172,800 customers.

ROADS
Lake Shore Drive’s morning status uncertain

Crews planned to work all night to try to clear Lake Shore Drive for Thursday morning’s commute, but there was no assurance that they would reach their goal.

The city’s plow drivers will focus on main streets, then turn their attention to side streets, officials said. Work on alleys will begin “after Streets and San gets a handle on side streets,” mayoral chief of staff Ray Orozco said.

By Thursday morning, most major interstates and highways in the area were expected to be clear of snow.

Cook County officials said most roads were passable Wednesday. Some roadways in the collar counties will likely remain buried in snow for Thursday’s commute.

Lake County officials said Wednesday that crews would continue to clear snow on main roads through the night. But 6-foot-tall snow drifts were still blowing across them in some areas. The same was true in McHenry County, where snowdrifts reached as high as 8 feet in areas.

Will County roads were expected to be generally clear for travel.

GOVERNMENT OFFICES
Some reopenings set in Cook, collar counties

Cook County government offices with the exception of most courthouses are expected to reopen Thursday.

Early voting will be offered only at one location Thursday, at 69 W. Washington St., Lower Level, according to the Chicago Board of Election Commissioners.

State agencies and most collar-county offices — including in Lake, DuPage, Kane and Will — are expected to reopen Thursday.

RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES
Brookfield Zoo won’t be taking a 2nd snow day

Brookfield Zoo, which closed Wednesday for the second time in its 77-year history, is scheduled to re-open at 10 a.m. Thursday.

Other institutions, including the Shedd Aquarium and the Museum of Science and Industry, will be closed.

This report compiled by Tribune reporters Lisa Black, Jon Hilkevitch, John Byrne, Gerry Smith, Tara Malone, Noreen S. Ahmed-Ullah, Duaa Eldeib and Joel Hood

Rescued drivers deal with abandonment issues

By Kristen Schorsch and Erika Slife
TRIBUNE REPORTER

The nearly 1,000 motorists forced to abandon their cars on Lake Shore Drive woke up to a bit of much-needed good news Wednesday when they learned their cars had likely been towed somewhere close to where they left them, and that they wouldn’t have to pay to get them back.

Vehicles were towed to lots off of Lake Shore Drive near Chicago, Belmont and Wilson avenues on the North Side and a lot near 47th Street and Cornell Avenue on the South Side. Other cars were taken to lots near North Avenue and Wells Street, Foster Avenue and Soldier Field.

City officials urged drivers to

call 311 first to find out where their cars were stored.

For the many who survived a harrowing night on the Drive, the reunion with their cars was sweet, even if there was wear-and-tear evidence of their ordeal.

War wounds, thought Allison Krecik and Tim Pigott, picking up their 1995 Honda Civic Hybrid, with its front bumper unhinged and wires dangling underneath the car, from the lot on Wilson.

“It’s very good we found it,” said Pigott, 36.

Drivers who deserted their cars in the collar counties and on rural highways will likely have to pay to retrieve them from private lots, authorities said. Tow truck operators hustled to remove autos, semis and even squad cars that were blocking roadways and com-

plicating cleanup and rescue efforts, county police said.

Motorists were asked to call their county dispatchers or municipal officials to find out where they were towed.

In Chicago, drivers scrambled over heaps of snow and through dozens of abandoned vehicles with upturned wipers — a sign that it was checked by emergency responders — in search of their cars. While most were relieved when they spotted them, others were bitter about the experience.

“I really didn’t want to leave it behind,” said Cara Zaleski, 26, who had to abandon her BMW 325 on Lake Shore Drive. “I stayed with it as long as I could.”

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People on Wednesday look for their vehicles, mostly towed from Lake Shore Drive, in a lot on Wilson Avenue. CHRIS SWEDA/TRIBUNE PHOTO

BLIZZARD OF 2011



Helping out
As the blizzard rages about midnight Tuesday, neighbors help a stranded motorist on Briar Place in Lakeview.
BRIAN CASSELLA/TRIBUNE PHOTO

BRAVING IT

During the storm, people — and pets — endured



Quiet city On Wednesday, a pedestrian crosses a nearly empty street in downtown Chicago as the snow continues to fall. KERI WIGINTON/TRIBUNE PHOTO



Many hands In Evanston, driver Allison Sweeney, 18, gets wild cheers from her girlfriends and a sister Wednesday as she pulls out of her buried parking spot. The group dug out the family car after a slumber party at the Sweeneys'. CHRIS WALKER/TRIBUNE PHOTO



Clearing the way A man uses a snowblower to clear a sidewalk Wednesday in Lakeview after 20 inches of snow fell. BRIAN CASSELLA/TRIBUNE PHOTO



Cold dog On a Lake Shore Drive bridge, this pooch looks like he's ready to go inside after an early walk with his owner on the lakefront Wednesday. E. JASON WAMBSGANS/TRIBUNE PHOTO

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A long ride to nowhere

Tribune reporter and other CTA bus riders trapped on Lake Shore Drive for hours

By Dahleen Glanton
TRIBUNE REPORTER

Any real Chicagoan knows how to prepare for a major storm. We pull out our heavy-duty parkas, stock up on groceries and take public transportation home before the snow starts piling up.

Many of us who did just that Tuesday still ended up spending much of the night on a Chicago Transit Authority bus on Lake Shore Drive. For me, it was a crowded No. 146 bus, which stalled south of Diversey Avenue. In blizzard conditions, it seemed like the middle of nowhere.

A rush-hour commute that normally takes less than 45 minutes turned into a nearly eight-hour ordeal that didn't end until early Wednesday.

For the first couple of hours, the bus continued to move, though at a slow pace, but that seemed normal, even safe, in whiteout conditions. Passengers who usually never glance at each other engaged in small talk, sharing information picked up from their cell phones.

But when we heard the news of a bus accident ahead that stalled traffic for miles, the mood changed.

People remained calm, but we realized we were in for a long, exhausting wait. Some began to worry about hungry children at home or dogs that needed to be walked. Others wondered what would happen if the bus ran out of fuel. Passengers who had been standing for hours wanted to sit. Eventually, they were allowed to get on a less-crowded bus stalled in front of us.

At one point, I stepped off the bus to interview someone stranded in a car. The snow was so deep and the wind so fierce that I could barely walk. The bus driver had to escort me back.

After about four hours, it became increasingly obvious that the driver, though as pleasant as he could be, was clueless about any rescue effort. He walked the aisle sharing what little he knew, mostly nothing more than what we already had heard from friends and relatives following the news at home.

In a comforting voice, he attempted to offer reassurance.

"The (news) media know we're here," he said.

Still, people in the back of the bus were growing anxious. Around 9 p.m., about a dozen passengers decided to leave the bus. Surely, they surmised, there must be other buses running, even if meant walking through the dark, snow-covered park to find them.

I tried to warn them that it would be futile. But off they went. Sure enough, in a



CTA bus riders who had been stuck for hours on Lake Shore Drive in the blizzard are evacuated by CTA employees and Chicago firefighters onto a southbound rescue bus around 11 p.m. Tuesday. **BRIAN CASSELLA/TRIBUNE PHOTOS**



Tribune reporter Dahleen Glanton, standing left, was among stranded commuters on a CTA No. 146 bus that became stuck in the snow on Lake Shore Drive.

few minutes, red-faced and snow-covered, they filed back on to the bus, some by their own accord and others forced to turn back by rescue workers at the scene.

After that, most passengers decided to just settle in for the long haul.

Carol Ann Treacy, 29, found some chocolates and mints in her pocket and passed

them out to people who were hungry. Gavin Sallie, 21, heard that a woman was trapped in a car nearby with a baby who needed water, so she bundled up and took them a bottle. Passengers graciously lent their cell phones to those whose batteries had died.

We talked about how thankful we were that no one on our bus was disruptive,

elderly or ill. That was before a woman who was having difficulty breathing left a car and joined us on the bus. Someone called 911. When paramedics arrived, they took her vitals and gave her a blanket.

About 11 p.m., a bus pulled up in a southbound lane to take us to Fullerton Avenue and Clark Street. No one could tell us where we would go from there, but rescue workers made it clear that it was our best chance to leave Lake Shore Drive anytime soon. The 146 bus, pinned in by stalled cars with snow drifts up to their hoods, wasn't going anywhere.

Most of us marched through the snow across a guardrail to the waiting bus, driven by Gino Gerbasi, dubbed our "snow angel" by one rider. Gerbasi, a CTA emergency services worker, had volunteered for the rescue mission because no driver was available. When we arrived at Clark, he tried to get some answers by radio. Soon, a No. 36 Broadway bus came by heading north.

Someone complained that the bus didn't stop close enough to their home. But patience was wearing thin by now, and another passenger snapped, "They can't drop everybody off in front of their door."

Three others and I ended up exiting the bus nearly five blocks from our homes. The walk took almost half an hour in the blizzard. Our feet sank into the snow piles as powerful winds battered our faces.

It was after midnight when I finally slogged into my home. But I was far luckier than countless others left stranded on Lake Shore Drive past daybreak Wednesday.

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City, stranded drivers trade blame

Continued from Page 1

the job that I hold as chief of staff," Raymond Orozco said shortly after meeting with Daley at the city's 911 center.

Orozco said he still believes keeping the drive open was the right decision, arguing that emergency responders would have had a difficult time if arterial streets had been clogged with traffic.

The apologies did little to ease the frustration of those who spent hours idling cars or crammed into stalled buses.

"I am disgusted and embarrassed that the city left us stranded for hours," said Jennifer Sullivan, who got stuck near the Fullerton Avenue exit at 7:30 p.m. Tuesday and sat in her car for 1½ hours before the ramp was cleared.

Armchair quarterbacking the city's response to major snowstorms has been a Chicago political tradition since January 1979, when two days of heavy snowfall slowed the entire city for weeks. When then-Mayor Michael Bilandic lost his re-election bid the next month, many attributed the defeat to the frustration of snow-bound residents.

Daley won't face the same fate as Bilandic — he's not on the ballot Feb. 22. But the top contenders to succeed him were happy to weigh in Wednesday.

Former U.S. Sen. Carol Moseley Braun said the city should have closed the drive sooner and leveled charges of "inadequate planning." Opponent Gery Chico disagreed, saying he understood the need to keep the road open, but he stressed that he didn't believe the city did enough to respond to the crisis. City Clerk Miguel del Valle and former Northwest Side U.S. Rep. Rahm Emanuel called for an evaluation of the city's snow response.

Daley left the city's 911 center before the afternoon news conference without talking to reporters gathered to get an update.



Drifting snow accumulates Wednesday inside a CTA bus abandoned on northbound Lake Shore Drive. Buses and nearly 1,000 other vehicles were trapped overnight on the drive. **E. JASON WAMBSGANS/TRIBUNE PHOTO**

"There's nothing more fundamental to being the mayor than, first, police and fire protection, and second, making sure the snow is cleaned up."

— Ald. Joe Moore, 49th

"It's his reputation at stake," said Ald. Joe Moore, 49th, a frequent Daley critic. "There's nothing more fundamental to being the mayor than, first, police and fire protection, and second, making sure the snow is cleaned up."

While the snow response was debated, Lake Shore Drive stayed shut down, and more than 200 empty cars were still trapped by

late afternoon. Orozco indicated the road would likely remain closed Thursday, but added, "There's always hope."

City officials knew before sunrise Wednesday that Lake Shore Drive had the potential to become a public relations nightmare. CTA buses and nearly 1,000 other vehicles had been trapped overnight, with some drivers not plucked from their cars until 3:30 a.m.,

later in a few cases.

With the storm bearing down on the city Tuesday, Orozco said officials monitoring conditions on the drive decided the need to get people home and keep traffic moving on surface streets trumped concerns about the storm.

"It was clear thousands and thousands of motorists leaving the Loop were relying on it as a major artery to get home (Tuesday) night," Orozco said. "We did not want to eliminate that option for those motorists, further pushing that large quantity of vehicles onto arterial streets that could clog up those roads, maybe cause more accidents or hamper emergency response."

That approach turned into disaster around 7:15 p.m., when a quick succession of five car crashes between North and Belmont avenues brought the already slow-moving traffic to a halt. Blinding snow and winds up to 70 mph swiftly rendered ramps impassable, and the city shut the road down for good at 7:58 p.m., leaving those still on the drive with nowhere to go.

Residents in apartments along the lakefront came out and brought food and water to some of the stranded drivers. Those who sat there called 911 asking for help, but none came, leaving many to wonder whether to stay put or venture out into the blizzard.

Jim Kaczmarek got stuck in the northbound lanes near Foster Avenue about 8 p.m. He said he called 911 several times but was told he couldn't be helped. He then called 311, where a woman who answered suggested he take a bus, flag a cab or go to a homeless shelter.

"I've never heard such stupid advice in my life," he said, saying he could have died if he had gotten stuck outside.

Snowplows drove by three times, Kaczmarek said, but the drivers just smiled as they plowed his car deeper in snow. While he passed the hours, a woman stuck in a car nearby that was running low on gas got in his car to stay warm.

Finally, Kaczmarek was pulled out by a tow truck about 8:30 a.m. With the ordeal over, he offered a straight-from-the-hip opinion about the city's handling of Lake Shore Drive.

"It was terrible," he said. "I don't think there should ever be a reason for someone to be stranded from 8 p.m. until 8:30 a.m."

Tribune reporters Kristen Mack, Hal Dardick and Rex W. Huppke contributed to this report.

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BLIZZARD OF 2011



Shasha Wu and her daughter wait for her husband at St. Joseph's Hospital, where the family spent the night after being stranded in their car. **WILLIAM DESHAZER/TRIBUNE PHOTO**

Stuck on roads, many strangers stuck together

Nightmarish ordeals
brightened by tales
of ingenuity, kindness

**By Cynthia Dizikes,
Stacy St. Clair
and Robert McCoppin**
TRIBUNE REPORTERS

Stranded in a biting snowstorm, you find yourself doing things you never imagined.

You take refuge in a stranger's car. You split a bite-size candy bar with your co-worker to stave off hunger. You drink melted snow to keep hydrated. And you even turn an empty box of baby wipes into a makeshift commode.

Hundreds of motorists were stranded throughout the region during this week's blizzard, their travels brought to an unexpected standstill by the extreme weather and snow-related accidents. From an urban thoroughfare like Lake Shore Drive to rural routes in Kane and Lake counties, victims were forced to rely on their own creativity and the kindness of strangers.

Throughout the region, rescue efforts were hampered by whiteout conditions, 70-mph gusts and waist-high drifts. In some cases, people waited 18 hours — grueling, and often frightening, waits destined to become this storm's legacy.

Jerry and Lisa Franz were in one of the 30 cars stranded near Antioch when a truck jackknifed near U.S. Highway 45 and Illinois Highway 173 around 9 p.m. The couple, married nearly 40 years, passed the night talking because both were too scared to sleep.

They hadn't eaten anything since lunch Tuesday, save some licorice and candy hearts Jerry had in the car. To keep hydrated, they filled a water bottle with snow and melted it inside the car.

In lieu of any bathroom facilities, Lisa Franz emptied a box of baby wipes and fashioned it into a makeshift commode.

"You have to do what you have to do," she said, laughing.

A Lake County sheriff's spokesman said the department had worked nonstop since Tuesday helping to rescue more than 200 stranded motorists in less than 24 hours. Officials also closed major roads throughout the area because authorities could not keep up with the number of people stuck in the snow.

Franz, who was rescued after 16 hours, remained good-natured about the predicament until she learned a stranded motorist was found dead in his vehicle on U.S. 45 near Casey Road. The cause of death has not been determined.

"I just started crying," Lisa Franz said. "You feel so helpless."

Lindsey Kundel's "freak-out moment" hit around 9 p.m. while she was stuck in her car on Lake Shore Drive.

"I had a complete breakdown," she said. "I was crying, calling people to figure out what to do. I realized I was running out of gas. That's when practicality takes over and you've got to do what you've got to do."

Kundel, a 21-year-old student teacher at Kenwood Academy, found herself stuck

on the northbound drive near the Fullerton and Belmont avenue exits.

Momentary bouts of panic gave way to resignation and, ultimately, relief as firefighters eventually reached drivers.

Kundel was rescued around 1 a.m. and taken to nearby St. Joseph's Hospital, where hundreds of stranded people spent the night.

At the hospital, Shasha Wu stared out a window, seemingly shellshocked from the night's ordeal. Eight months pregnant, she and her husband went grocery shopping for their Chinese New Year's Eve dinner before picking up their daughter from day care in Chicago.

Her family huddled together in their car for a couple of hours. But then the battery went dead. The driver of the car behind them took in Wu and her daughter to keep them warm, while her husband stayed with their vehicle. "It felt like the end of the world," Wu said.

Craig Close, who was carpooling with a co-worker, came to a halt a few feet from the Fullerton exit. With snow caked over the windows of his Honda, he called 911 for help. The dispatcher told him to use his best judgment. So he turned off his engine to save gas, called his family and split a snack-size Nestle Crunch bar with his friend.

About six hours later, firefighters escorted him to a warming bus. "We feel like we've been in the frickin' Odyssey," Close said as he arrived at work shortly before 7 a.m.

Jennifer Boznos made it home 23 hours after completing a journey that included a night spent

huddling with her four dogs in her car in rural Kane County. On Wednesday afternoon, she hiked a mile and a half through waist-high snowdrifts before piling into the back of a stranger's pickup truck with her border collies for the final leg home.

She was in one of about 60 vehicles stranded along a stretch of Illinois Highway 47 where even regular emergency vehicles and plows could not operate. Eventually, many motorists were rescued by snowmobilers from a Hampshire club.

Though the dogs prevented Boznos from accepting a ride to a gas station, she appreciated their efforts. "Those snowmobilers were cowboys of the highest order — they were incredible," she said.

Amid the cold and fear, motorists said they also discovered something surprising in the isolation: a sense of community.

Before emergency responders reached the scene, the stranded did well-being checks on each other and pooled whatever resources they had. And on Lake Shore Drive, nearby residents waded into the snow, carrying food and drinks.

Erica Sharpe, who was stuck in her van with two children, wiped away tears Wednesday as she recalled one stranger who slipped soda and chips to the family through their car's ice-caked window.

"It was a beautiful thing," Sharpe said. "It just made me think that there are good people out there."

Tribune reporters Hailey Branson-Potts, Jenn Zimmerman and Art Barnum and freelancer Cliff Ward contributed.

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Chicago Tribune

CTA plows through, but storm puts Metra on ice

By Jon Hilkevitch and Richard Wronski
TRIBUNE REPORTERS

Though the Chicago Transit Authority shut a Pink Line station and closed the Yellow Line/Skokie Swift because of snow drifts, it wound up with a good story to tell, providing more than 1 million rides each day during the Blizzard of 2011. The picture wasn't as bright at Metra, which canceled trains on five lines, struggled to get enough crews and left many riders feeling left in the cold as they tried to dig out crucial information at the rail line's website.

Reeling from a 20-plus-inch snow and bracing for arctic wind chills Thursday, the Chicago area's hard-hit commuters know they have endured one for the record books. Here's a look at how it went for the region's mass transit agencies during the storm.

CTA

When a frequent under-achiever suddenly outperforms the competition, under great duress in fact, admirers and detractors alike are quick to hand out an enthusiastic "attaboy!" Mark Breen, a technology expert and realist, said he would have been happy if he waited an hour for his CTA train to arrive Wednesday morning, as the storm nearly paralyzed the Chicago area. But after he cross-country skied from his home in Berwyn to the Blue Line station in Oak Park, Breen waited only 15 minutes for his train. "When they were deciding Tuesday who was going to be able make it to work ... I knew I'd be in because I knew the CTA would be running," said Breen, 50, who works at a Loop bank. By most accounts, the CTA shined this week when the sky thickened and dumped snow by the foot. The problems included shutting down the 54th/Cermak station at the end of the Pink Line because of blowing and drifting snow. The Yellow Line/Skokie Swift remained closed for a second day Wednesday because of drifts. All 150 bus routes were in action, but drivers faced difficulties staying on schedule because of snow and ice. Transit officials attributed their overall success to extensive winter planning that started in July and intensified over the weekend before the weather turned frightening. CTA employees on standby status were alerted that they could be called into service to cover for colleagues who couldn't get to bus garages and rail yards, officials said. Some workers were assigned to double shifts, and by Wednesday morning a number of managers had worked more than 24 hours straight.

"We strategically placed rail employees so they could quickly respond to signal and interlocking problems (at track switches) caused by snow and ice," CTA spokeswoman Noelle Gaffney said. Audra Jervey, of the Roscoe Village neighborhood, said her walk to the Paulina Brown Line stop took twice as long as normal, but things ran smoothly once she got there. "The train service seems to be really good," she said. "I haven't waited much longer than I normally wait." That said, Jervey acknowledged, "I haven't tried the bus."

Metra

For those who tried the train, the challenges were often daunting. In more than 25 years, Metra trains have been delayed by weather, accidents and equipment problems, but the blizzard marked the first time an entire Metra line was canceled. And it wasn't just one line; it happened on five lines — three entire lines and parts of two others — an unprecedented event for the agency. "We've had some extreme weather where all 11 lines were impacted: downed power lines, high winds, floods, tornados. But there's never been a time when five of our lines were completely shut down," Metra spokeswoman Judy Pardonnet said.

The lines closed Wednesday were the Heritage Corridor, North Central Service, SouthWest Service, Metra Electric Blue Island branch and the McHenry branch of the Union Pacific Northwest line. Those lines normally carry less than a third of Metra's daily ridership of about 307,000. Metra estimated it carried only 4,000 riders into the city Wednesday. The shutdowns were only part of the problem for Metra, however. The re-

maining lines operated on reduced service, following Metra's Sunday schedule, with most trains running every two hours. That caused confusion among frustrated passengers at the Ogilvie Transportation Center as a muddled version of the rush hour started. Commuters milled around, many of them bewildered as to when their trains would depart. While most were understanding about delays caused by the storm, some

riders griped about Metra's efforts to communicate with customers. "It's literally that you arrive here and you roll the dice," said Reid Wilson, of Northfield. Metra said the shutdowns and limited schedules were caused by an inability to get crews to the trains and the unavailability of equipment. Although Metra officials said Tuesday that they were stationing crews so they would be readily available to get to

work, train conductors and engineers were unable to get to trains in outlying areas in Kane, McHenry, Will and Lake counties, Pardonnet said. "The problem was local roads being closed due to a state of emergency," she said. Metra also had problems with high snowdrifts blocking coaches in rail yards, frozen switches and at some crossings. Commuters who got Metra e-mails or who listened to broadcast reports

early Wednesday heard about the limited service. But that information was not clearly available early on Metra's website. "There just wasn't enough information," said Suzy Tournillon, of Rogers Park. *Tribune reporters Dawn Rhodes, Tim Bannon and Dan Hinkel contributed to this report.* jhilkevitch@tribune.com rwronski@tribune.com

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BLIZZARD OF 2011

Forecasters right on the nose, for once

Better tools, training, communication add up to better prediction

By Joel Hood
TRIBUNE REPORTER

Meteorologists nailed this one. By the time the snow stopped falling Wednesday, the total snowfall recorded at O'Hare International Airport reached 20.2 inches, putting the storm third behind historic winter snows of 1967 and 1999.

If this storm was different from the other two, it was because weather scientists had seen it coming days in advance.

"We did pretty damn well," said Mark Ratzer, a meteorologist at the National Weather Service in Chicago. "Our forecast all along for Chicago had been around 20 inches and that's essentially what we ended up with, which was right in the ballpark given the magnitude of the storm."

It was a remarkably accurate forecast given the size and complexity of a fast-moving storm that flared up Friday off the coast of California. Meteorologists expected that moist air from the Pacific and Gulf Coast would give the storm heft and volume, and therefore knew that the system could bring blizzardlike conditions to the Chicago area.

By Monday, scientists had determined there was a 75 percent chance that Chicago would see at least a foot of snow overnight and that wind gusts would top 50 mph.

They also had correctly predicted the possibility of what's commonly called "thundersnow," an unusual meteorological phenomenon in which intense thunder and lightning accompany a snowstorm. At the peak of the storm's fury, lightning was hitting the ground as many as 50 times in one hour, Ratzer said.

Thundersnow occurs when warm, moist air circulates vertically with the cold temperatures of a winter storm below, experts said. On Tuesday night, thunder and lightning added an eerie element to the wind-whipped snowstorm.

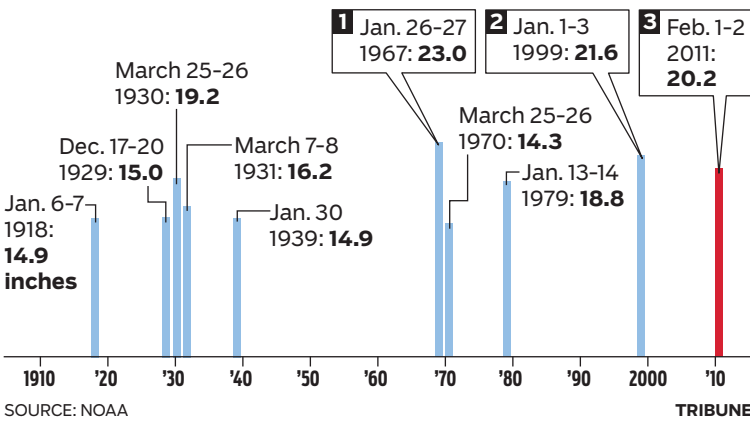
"Thundersnow generally doesn't last very long and it looks



A walk to the bank turns into an exercise in tenacity Wednesday in downtown Evanston. Meteorologists predicted not only the severity of the storm, but also the possibility of "thundersnow," in which intense thunder and lightning accompany the blizzard. CHRIS WALKER/TRIBUNE PHOTO

10 largest Chicago snowstorms

Chicago experienced its third-largest snowfall of all time Feb. 1-2, 2011, with 20.2 inches falling at O'Hare International Airport.



pretty weird because it's snowing and your visibility is limited and the whole sky lights up green," Ratzer said. "I don't recall seeing a storm, in my 16 years I've been

doing this, that produced as much thunder and lightning as this one."

The storm's severity varied slightly throughout the area.

Hardest hit were lakefront North Side neighborhoods and North Shore suburbs, where at one point snow was falling at 3 to 4 inches an hour: Areas near the lake also took on a couple of extra inches of lake-effect snow.

Meteorologists were able to forecast this storm so precisely because of advancements in computer modeling technology, as well as improvements in data collection and observation, said John Ferree, a severe storm expert at the National Weather Service in Oklahoma.

Computer models are now able to calculate up to 20 different scenarios of a storm's impact and then select the average, or the most likely that is to occur based on ever-changing weather conditions.

This modeling software has been used for only about five years and factors in the inherent uncertainties about a storm's behav-

ior.

The computer programs are also able to take in other variables, such as the atmospheric profiles of temperatures, moisture and winds taken throughout the country by surface observation, weather balloons, satellites, commercial airlines and advanced weather instruments on weather service aircraft.

"We have better training, better tools, better communication and it all adds up to a better forecast," Ferree said. "As a forecast of a major event, this one turned out pretty good."

Which makes Thursday's forecast of extended subzero temperatures and extreme wind-chill warnings of 20 below zero all the more chilling.

"The skies are clearing up and it's going to get cold. Real cold," Ratzer said.

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7 deaths apparently weather-related, officials say

By Deaneese Williams-Harris and Ruth Fuller
CHICAGO TRIBUNE

At 11:45 p.m. Tuesday, near the height of the third-worst blizzard in the city's history, Chicago police received a distress call: A man had been blown in, or had fallen into, Diversey Harbor.

The Police Marine Unit launched a rescue, but amid the blowing snow and high winds, it was impossible to enter the water. What's more, officers couldn't pinpoint the best location to dive. After several hours, "they spotted a hat near a dock," said Officer Robert Perez, a spokesman.

The body of Peter Davis, 60, of the 2300 block of North Lincoln

Park West, was pulled from the harbor about 4:35 a.m. in the 2800 block of North Lake Shore Drive. Officials don't know why he was out on the lakefront Tuesday, but by Wednesday, Davis was being called the only known blizzard-related fatality in Chicago.

Across the area, six others died in what appeared to be snow-related deaths. That toll seemed low compared to past storms. Nearly 40 people died in the 1967 blizzard. But Dr. David Beiser at the University of Chicago Medical Center said "it's reasonable to expect that the numbers will rise in the next 24 hours."

The first fatalities came at 2:30 p.m. Tuesday, in rural Newton County, Ind., when Matthew C.

Taylor, 17, and a passenger were killed after a semi-tractor slammed into Taylor's car.

The passenger's name was not released, but Taylor's mother said sheriff's police told her that the passenger was a 43-year-old hitchhiker offered a ride by her son.

"That was just like my son, to try and help someone he didn't even know," Deborah Taylor said.

In Lyons, a 58-year-old man likely had a fatal heart attack Tuesday night after shoveling snow at his home in the 4200 block of Konrad Avenue, police said. It was shortly before midnight and roads were impassable, so police used an armored vehicle to take him to a waiting ambulance. The man died at Loyola University

Medical Center in Maywood.

Rescue crews also struggled to reach Vincent Cerrentano, 71, who likely had a heart attack at a ComEd substation in south suburban Manhattan where he worked as a security guard. After a responding ambulance slid into a ditch, snowmobiles were dispatched, but it took about 70 minutes to get Cerrentano to Silver Cross Hospital in Joliet. He was transferred to Palos Community Hospital, where he died.

In Grayslake on Wednesday, a 48-year-old man was found dead in his vehicle on U.S. Highway 45 near Casey Road about 1 a.m., Lake County Coroner Richard Keller said. The man's vehicle — one of several others stranded

there — was running. The man, whose identity was not released, might have had a heart attack, Keller said, but the cause of death could not yet be confirmed.

In Downers Grove, a man, 69, was pronounced dead at Advocate Good Samaritan Hospital Wednesday after having chest pains while shoveling, officials said.

Williams-Harris is a Tribune reporter; Fuller is a freelance reporter. Reporters Art Barnum, Christy Gutowski, Jeremy Gornier, Andy Grimm, Colleen Mastony, Dennis Sullivan, Liam Ford, Megan Craig and Andrew L. Wang contributed to this report.

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BLIZZARD OF 2011

Total snowfall at O'Hare: 20.2"

20"

18"

12"

6"

Snowy lane full of warmth

Mohawk Street shows signs of life not seen on a typical day

Wednesday was a rare day on Mohawk Street in Chicago. Things happened that had never happened before.

To begin with, I was on the street at dawn. My assignment: Pick a single Chicago block and chronicle its residents coping with the snow.

My car was up to the mirrors in wet fluff, so I walked a few blocks from home, plunging through the knee-high drifts, admiring the white dervishes whirling in the wind, and soaking in the odd quiet of a weekday morning without Chicago buzzing off to work.

I had decided to choose a block based on one vital criterion: wherever I first spied other humans foolish enough to disregard the warnings to stay inside.

In the empty landscape, I arrived at the 1700 block of Mohawk. And there was Philippe Schaillee.

Schaillee, the chief marketing officer for Sara Lee Corp., had just brushed the snow off his BMW SUV, hopped in and headed for the gym. Fifteen yards later, his car was marooned in a snow pile, and he was building muscle with a shovel.

"I was the stupid one who was planning to go out," he said jovially.

His neighbor, Jeff Sampson, who had ambled into the lonely dawn with his dog, was helping him dig. It was the first time they'd ever shoveled together.

Momentous? Not in the big scheme. But it was the kind of unexpected neighborly encounter that happened all over Chicago and the suburbs Wednesday.

The 1700 block of Mohawk on the Near North Side is a mix of



Eric Gurry snaps a photo of his wife, Suzi, and daughter Nelly, 7, on North Mohawk Street in Chicago. Neighbors gathered to play, sled, walk dogs and, of course, shovel. DAVID PIERINI/TRIBUNE PHOTO



Mary Schmich

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ancient wood-frame houses and new brick homes, of renters and homeowners, old and young, well-to-do and definitely not.

Like so many other blocks around the city on Wednesday, it felt like an island: hard to get in, hard to get out. No matter how much you might hear on Lake Shore Drive, the neigh-

borhood beyond the block was a mystery.

On Mohawk, intrepid scouts — gripping dog leashes and coffee mugs — ventured on foot into the wider world and returned to answer urgent questions:

Was North Avenue passable? How about Larrabee? Was Starbucks open?

Some residents of Mohawk braved their way to work. Tom Fuller rode the "L" to his job in the Loop, though he'd felt a little queasy and dizzy on Tuesday when the Prudential building swayed in the gale-force winds.

Other residents tried to go to work.

A little after nine, as the snow picked up again — slanting, pelting streams of white — Mary Rose, who works for United Airlines reservations, wandered into the street with a shovel on her shoulder. Only four-wheel-drives had made it down the street, but she would try to free her car. She had to

get to Elk Grove Village somehow.

"They gave me a couple of hours," she said. "They told me to go slow and be safe."

The snow-removal guys were having trouble getting to the job too.

At the corner, a shoveling-service van spun its wheels. One of the guys who hopped out to push taught me the Spanish word for "to shovel" — palear.

Shoveling was what Kelly Fowler was doing due to another unexpected occurrence.

"My husband is mayor of this block," she said, scooping and dumping and scooping some more.

His mayoral qualifications? His snowblower, which he uses to clear neighbors' walks. But on Wednesday, even the snowblower was trapped in snow out back.

Finally, by the middle of the day, the snow moved off. The sun came out. So did the kids and dogs.

"You gotta make it fun, or you go out of your mind," said Suzi Gurry, who had come out to play with her husband and three kids.

Since Chicago's public schools hadn't closed for snow in a dozen years, her kids had never had a snow day. Another Wednesday first.

"There was a thunderous roar of excitement in our house when the news came yesterday," she said.

Before long, other neighbors were out too. There was a snow scooter and an inner tube; there were sleds and cameras. Someone passed on cross country skis.

"You never see kids out like this in the summertime," said Kim Hauman, a middle-school teacher in Libertyville who was glad school was closed because her car was under the snow. "I've never seen action like this on the street."

Bill Sterbens, a retired Peoples Gas worker, hadn't seen it in a long time. He has lived on the block since 1978 and the long-gone days when neighbors flocked to each other's stoops.

He leaned on his shovel and smiled at the snow party in the street.

"A lot of people out doing neighborly things like we used to do," he said.

For all the hardship that it brings, snow also civilizes. On Mohawk Street and all over Chicago on Wednesday, life slowed down. People met neighbors they'd never stopped to meet. They had unexpected good times with their kids. They got exercise outdoors. On a day they ordinarily would be rushing, they curled up with a book, a meal, a friend.

By Thursday, routine would resume, with the added difficulty of a fierce wind chill and snow frozen as hard as concrete.

But for one day, on blocks everywhere, life was different, and while it lasted, it was fun.

Making the best of the blizzard

Youngsters — even adults — find ways to savor the big snow

By Jodi S. Cohen and Julie Deardorff
TRIBUNE REPORTERS

It was like a second Christmas morning.

Children and adults alike woke up Wednesday amazed at the amount of snow — and then traded work and school for snowy fun.

"It had a Christmas kind of feel to it. Our kindergartner woke up and said, 'Look outside! Look outside!'" said Jen Banowetz of unincorporated Naperville. "We're snow-day kind of people."

That meant sledding down the hill in their backyard — known in the neighborhood as Mount Banowetz — and measuring their three young kids next to the

Line shows storm's actual snow total

snow drifts.

Chicago and the suburbs looked more like ski resorts and snow playgrounds Wednesday, with streets that were useless to cars turned into ideal spaces to play.

There were snowball fights and snow angels, and children gathered at one neighborhood house to jump off the rail of a porch deck into a massive heap of snow.

"Woooooaaahhhh," screamed Danielle Boucher, 8, her arms flailing, as she made the leap.

Using Facebook, Chicagoans planned snowball fights in Grant Park and on the campuses of Northwestern University and the University of Chicago, both of which made the rare decision to cancel classes Wednesday.

U. of C. student Chris Kingdom joined at least 100 students for a snowball fight in the Quad, where freshmen and sophomores took on juniors and seniors.

Asked who was winning, Kingdom, a sophomore, said: "Definitely the underclassmen." He normally would have been spending the day in classes on 20th century Europe and biology ("boring as hell," he said).

"I would be sitting in a stuffy classroom," Kingdom, 19, said. "Instead, we are tackling peo-



Andrea Soule, left, and Janissa Saracino plunge into the carefree spirit of things, frolicking in the snow in Chicago's Lincoln Park neighborhood Wednesday, a rare snow day from school. BRIAN CASSELLA/TRIBUNE PHOTO



Jack McCauley, 8, left, and Griffin Smith, 7, relish a taste of fresh snow in Evanston. CHRIS WALKER/TRIBUNE PHOTO

ple."

Older adults had fun too.

Along Michigan Avenue downtown, Diane Watry attracted the wide eyes and snapping cell phone cameras of gawkers as she cross-country

skied to work. The 55-year-old skied seven miles from her South Loop home to her office in Lakeview.

"It's been fabulous," Watry, bundled in a ski coat, ski pants and furry hat, said with a smile

as flurries of snow stuck to her reddened face.

Erdem Kiciman, 29, a snow artist, left his downtown office around lunchtime Wednesday in order to make snow monsters. At LaSalle Street and Grand Avenue, Kiciman hopped onto the snow and created a jagged mouth using a dust pan. He then piled the snow into two balls on top of the mouth and spray painted two red eyes.

"I might be too old to be doing this," Kiciman said, before shrugging his shoulders and heading down the street to another snow bank.

Some families had fun inside, inviting their neighbors over for pancake breakfasts and potluck dinners.

In Evanston, Mike and Terrie Jurichko spontaneously invited more than a dozen neighbors over for a "Snow Day pancake breakfast" which in-

cluded Greek sausage, turkey bacon, cantaloupe and a cheese grits soufflé.

"Let's get these kids juiced up on syrup and then send them all out to play while we enjoy a nice quite cup of coffee together," the e-mailed invitation read.

High-stepping through the 2-foot drifts, 17 adults and children made their way to the Jurichkos' home by 9:30 a.m.

"Last night as we were walking in the house I thought I wouldn't see my neighbors for three days," said Mike, who has a 5-year-old and a 3-year-old. "But even if they can't drive, people can walk over."

Tribune reporters Kristen Schorsch, Cynthia Dizikes and Megan Twohey contributed to this report.

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